

The Honorable Clark Clifford
Chairman
The President's Foreign Intelligence
Advisory Board
Executive Office Building

Dear Clark:

Thank you for your letter of 22 June forwarding a proposed memorandum and recommendations to the President concerning the problem of information handling in the intelligence community.

I have not had the benefit of seeing the study to which you refer in your letter and on which I understand the memorandum to the President is based. Before attempting any definitive comment on the proposed memorandum, it would be very helpful to have an opportunity to examine the study. Information available within the community does not support many of the conclusions of the proposed memorandum and I am not, therefore, at this time able to agree with at least some of its recommendations. Factual evidence contained in the basic study which I have not yet seen may of course change my view. Some preliminary observations will suggest my current reaction to at least some of the points made in the memorandum to the President and the accompanying recommendations.

Paragraph 3 of the memorandum to the President uses the example of biographic intelligence as an illustration of the deficiencies of the community in adapting modern methods and technologies to infor-

mation handling. Actually it is my impression that the field of biographics is not a good example, either of the problem or of inadequacy in handling of information within the community. Indeed, experienced officials in the community believe that one of the reasons why progress with the experimental COINS project (referred to on page 2 of the recommendations section of the report) has been delayed is due to the selection of biographics as the subject for the experimental project. In the view of these officials, biographic information is not a particularly rewarding subject for use as a pilot system in the information handling field. That existing facilities are not entirely inadequate is suggested by the fact that CIA recently supplied Dr. Hornig with 44 biographies of [REDACTED] personalities on something less than three hours notice. I believe that it would be a mistake to include references to alleged deficiencies in this field in a formal report to the President.

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I also believe that it would be a mistake to include the statement made in paragraph 4 of the proposed memorandum to the effect that "another crisis situation such as the presence of Soviet strategic missiles in Cuba would most likely require improvised information-handling arrangements because of inadequacies in the present system." We have of course just experienced another crisis which placed demands on the information handling facilities of the community comparable to those levied by the Cuban missile crisis of 1962. It is my personal impression, which I believe to be shared

by other senior officials of the Government that the collation and dissemination of evaluated intelligence was accomplished promptly and with commendable efficiency. I have had no indications of significant inadequacies in the present system which were revealed as a result of the recent Middle Eastern crisis.

I of course welcome the guidance and support of the Bureau of the Budget in efforts to improve information handling procedures and facilities within the community. It is my impression, however, that the present authority of the Director of the Bureau of the Budget is fully adequate to provide this guidance and support. Similarly, the Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs and the Special Assistant to the President for Science and Technology individually can also contribute substantially to certain aspects of the information handling problem as it exists within the intelligence community. I see no need, however, for the review body proposed under recommendation 2 of the basic recommendations which would be made up of these three officials and which would perform a "monitoring function, including periodic follow-ups, with respect to the establishment and operation of the community-wide system."

As I understand them, the specific conclusions and recommendations of the memorandum to the President and the attached recommendations are based on an inadequate understanding of the difficulties

and some disadvantages inherent in an attempt to establish a fully integrated information handling system on the present functional, legal and organizational structure of the intelligence community. This is not to say that very substantial improvement in present methods and arrangements for the rapid collation and dissemination of information is not possible and desirable. My predecessor and I had consciously postponed a vigorous all-out attack on the community information handling problem pending the results of the panel referred to in your letter which was established by the PFIAB and the President's Scientific Advisor in June of 1965, and which produced the study on which the present recommendations are based. We have recently, however, initiated a full-scale review in this area and my Deputy for National Intelligence Programs Evaluation (NIPE) has obtained a very senior and experienced officer to act as a focal point for providing centralized guidance and stimulus for the improvement of information handling methods and procedures in the community as a whole. In connection with this action we have reviewed and are in the process of reorganizing the appropriate USIB structure. I do not believe that the creation of an additional deputy to the Director of Central Intelligence is wise or necessary.

The foregoing are preliminary thoughts which are submitted in response to your request for informal comments on the proposed report.

Sincerely,